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RASHĪD AL-DĪN : THE FIRST WORLD HISTORIAN*

By John Andrew Boyle

Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, often referred to by his contemporaries as Rashīd Ṭabīb (“Rashīd the Physician”), was born c. 1247 in Hamadān, the Ecbatana of the Ancients. On the period of his youth and early manhood we possess no information whatsoever. The son of a Jewish apothecary, he became at the age of 30 a convert to Islam, having previously, it must be assumed, been a loyal member of the Jewish community of his native town, then an important centre of Jewish culture and the seat of a well organized *yeshivah* or Rabbinical college, circumstances which account for his familiarity with the customs and traditions of Judaism and his knowledge of the Hebrew language.¹ His conversion may well have coincided with his entry into the service of the Il-Khan Abaqa (1265–81), the second Mongol ruler of Iran, in the capacity of a physician, and he is perhaps to be identified with the Jew called Rashīd al-Daula (a variant form of his name), who, according to the continuator of Barhebraeus,² was appointed steward to the Il-Khan Geikhatu (1291–95) “to prepare food which was suitable . . . , of every kind, which might be demanded, and wheresoever it might be demanded”. At the time of economic upheaval which preceded the experimental introduction of *ch’ao* or Chinese paper currency, when, we are told, not even a single sheep could be procured for the Il-Khan’s table, Rashīd al-Daula “stood up strongly in this matter and he spent a large sum of his own money, and he bought myriads of sheep and oxen, and he appointed butchers and cooks, and he was ready in a most wonderful fashion on the condition that in every month of days silver should be collected for the *ṣāhib-dīwān*, because the treasury was empty, and it was destitute of money, and not even the smallest coin was to be found therein. And he wrote letters and sent them to the various countries, but the Jew was unable to collect anything. And thus the whole of his possessions came to an end, and as he was unable to stand in (i.e. continue) a work such as he was doing, he left and fled”.

If this Rashīd al-Daula is not the future statesman and historian, it is strange that a man of the latter’s talents should have remained in total obscurity from his entry into Abaqa’s service until his appearance, some twenty years later, in the spring of 1298, as a deputy to Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī, the vizier of Abaqa’s grandson Ghazan (1295–1304). Rashīd al-Dīn³ himself recounts the circumstances which led to the execution of Ṣadr al-Dīn, perhaps the most perfidious and unprincipled of the Il-Khanid viziers. It emerges from the account that he already stood high in the Il-Khan’s favour and was on terms of friendship with his commander-in-chief the Mongol Qutlugh-Shāh. In the autumn of 1298 Sa’d al-Dīn Sāvajī was appointed Ṣadr al-Dīn’s successor with Rashīd al-Dīn as his associate. We next hear of Rashīd as accompanying Ghazan on his last expedition (1302–03) against the Mamlūks: in March 1303, he played a prominent part in the negotiations which led to the surrender of Raḥbat al-Shām, the present-day Syrian town of Meyadin on the west bank of the Euphrates. It was during Ghazan’s brief reign that he carried out the fiscal reforms which go under his master’s name but of which Rashīd himself may well have been the real author, reforms intended to protect the sedentary population from the rapacity of the Mongol nomad aristocracy. It was now too that he was commissioned by Ghazan to write a history of the Mongols and their conquests, a work completed and expanded under Ghazan’s successor Öljeitü (1304–16) to form the *Jāmi’ al-Tawārikh* (“Complete Collection of Histories”),

* The text of a lecture delivered at the British Institute of Persian Studies, Tehran, on the 9th April, 1969. Based on the Introduction to the *Successors of Genghis Khan*, a forthcoming translation of Volume I, Part II, of the *Jāmi’ al-Tawārikh*, it appears in *Iran* by the courtesy of the publishers, the Royal Institute for Translation, Tehran, and the Columbia University Press.

¹ On the question of Rashīd al-Dīn’s Jewish origins see B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran* (Leipzig, 1939), pp. 247–9, W. J. Fischel “Azarbaijan in Jewish History”, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XXII (1953), pp. 1–21 (15–18).

² *The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l-Faraj*, transl. E. A. W. Budge (London, 1932), p. 496.

³ See the *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V (Cambridge, 1968), p. 385.

“ a vast historical encyclopedia ”, in the words of Barthold,⁴ “ such as no single people, either in Asia or in Europe, possessed in the Middle Ages ”.

Rashīd enjoyed still greater favour under Öljeitü. He had become the owner of vast estates in every corner of the Il-Khan's realm: orchards and vineyards in Azerbaijan, date-palm plantations in Southern Iraq, arable land in Western Anatolia. The administration of the state was almost a private monopoly of his family: of his fourteen sons eight were governors of provinces, including the whole of Western Iran, Georgia, Iraq and the greater part of what is now Turkey. Immense sums were at his disposal for expenditure on public and private enterprises. In Öljeitü's new capital at Sulṭāniya he built a fine suburb with a magnificent mosque, a *madrassa* and a hospital; at Tabriz he founded a similar suburb called after himself the Rab'-i Rashīdī. On the transcription, binding, maps and illustrations of his various writings he is said to have laid out a sum of 60,000 *dīnārs*, the equivalent of £36,000 in our money.

In 1312 his colleague Sa'd al-Dīn fell from grace and was put to death; and for a brief while Rashīd al-Dīn was in danger of sharing his fate. A letter in the Hebrew script purporting to be written by Rashīd was discovered and laid before Öljeitü. In it the writer urged his correspondent, a Jewish protégé of one of the Mongol emirs, to administer poison to the Il-Khan. Rashīd al-Dīn was able to prove the letter a forgery and continued to enjoy Öljeitü's favour and confidence for the remainder of his reign. A rift, however, soon developed with his new colleague, Tāj al-Dīn 'Alī Shāh, and the Il-Khan sought to remedy matters by dividing his empire into two administrative spheres, Rashīd al-Dīn being responsible for Central and Southern Iran while 'Alī-Shāh was placed in charge of North-Western Iran, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. The antagonism between the two viziers persisted despite this segregation of their duties, and in 1317, in the reign of Öljeitü's son Abū Sa'id (1316–35), 'Alī Shāh succeeded by his intrigues in securing his rival's dismissal. Persuaded against his will to re-enter the Il-Khan's service Rashīd al-Dīn was attacked once again by 'Alī Shāh and his party and accused of having poisoned Abū Sa'id's father. According to the Mamlūk sources he admitted having gone against the advice of Öljeitü's physicians and prescribed a purgative for his disorder, the symptoms of which do appear to have been consistent with metallic poisoning. On this admission he was cruelly put to death, his severed head, according to the same authorities, being taken to Tabriz and carried about the town for several days with cries of: “ This is the head of the Jew who abused the name of God; may God's curse be upon him! ” Rab'-i Rashīdī, the suburb of Tabriz which he had founded and given his name, was looted by the mob, and all his estates and property were confiscated, even his pious foundations being robbed of their endowments. His final resting-place, a mausoleum of his own construction, was destroyed, less than a century later, by Mīrān-Shāh, the mad son of Tīmūr, who caused Rashīd's body to be exhumed and re-interred in the Jewish cemetery.

The encyclopaedist Ibn Ḥajar of Ascalon (d. 1449) reproduces what was undoubtedly the contemporary assessment of Rashīd al-Dīn: a Jewish apothecary's son turned Muslim who rose in the service of the Il-Khans to the rank of vizier; who championed and protected the followers of his adopted faith; who built fine public buildings in Tabriz; who, while merciless to his enemies, was generous in the extreme to the learned and the pious; and who wrote a rationalistic commentary on the Qur'ān for which he was accused of *ilhād*, i.e. of belonging to the outcast sect of the Ismā'ilis or Assassins.⁵ To the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, the work on which his fame now rests, Ibn Ḥajar makes no reference whatsoever.

Rashīd al-Dīn⁶ himself has described the elaborate measures which he adopted to ensure the preservation of his writings and their transmission to posterity. These measures included the translation into Arabic of all his Persian works, and into Persian of all his Arabic works, while a specified annual sum was allocated for the preparation of two complete transcripts, one in either language, “ on the best Baghdād paper and in the finest and most legible writing ”, to be presented to one of the chief towns of the Muslim world. Despite these and other precautions it was the opinion of Quatremère⁷ that “ we have lost the greater part of the works of this learned historian, and all the measures which he took have

⁴ *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 46.

⁵ *Al-durar al-kāmina fī a'yān al-mī'at al-thāmina*, Vol. III (Hyderabad, 1349/1930–1), pp. 232–3.

⁶ See E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. III, pp. 77–9.

⁷ Quoted by Browne, *op.cit.*, pp. 79–80.

not had a more fortunate success than the precautions devised by the Emperor Tacitus to secure the preservation of his illustrious relative's writings". The passage of time has shown Quatremère to have been unduly pessimistic. A diligent search of the libraries of Persia, Turkey and Central Asia has filled some of the lacunae, and it is too early to assume that any of the works still missing is irretrievably lost.

Of his theological writings reference has already been made to his commentary on the Qur'ān, which bore the title *Miftāḥ al-Tafāsīr* ("Key to the Commentaries"). Neither this nor his *Favā'id-i Sulṭāniya* ("Royal Deductions"), based on a conversation with Öljeitü on religious and philosophical questions, nor his *As'ila u Ajviba* ("Questions and Answers"), containing the author's correspondence with Muslim and even Byzantine scholars, has yet been published. His *Kitāb al-Aḥwā wa-'l-Āthār* ("Book of Animals and Monuments") dealing with botany, agriculture and architecture is described by Browne as "unhappily lost". Several chapters of it were however published in Tehran in 1905 from a manuscript which may still be in existence. Finally, a work unknown to Quatremère, the *Mukātabāt-i Rashīdī*, the correspondence of Rashīd al-Dīn, mainly on political and financial matters, with his sons and other Il-Khanid officials, was published in 1947 by Professor Shafi of Lahore and has recently been translated into Russian.⁸

Of his *magnum opus*, the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, there appear to have been two versions, an earlier (1306–07) consisting of three, and a later (c. 1310) consisting of four volumes.⁹ Volume I, the *Ta'rikh-i Ghāzānī*, a history of the Mongols from their beginnings until the reign of Ghazan, has already been mentioned. In Volume II, commissioned by Ghazan's successor Öljeitü, Rashīd al-Dīn was set the formidable task of compiling a general history of all the Eurasian peoples with whom the Mongols had come into contact. Beginning with Adam and the Patriarchs the volume recounts the history of the pre-Islamic kings of Persia; of Muḥammad and the Caliphate down to its extinction by the Mongols in 1258; of the post-Muḥammadan dynasties of Persia; of Oghuz and his descendants, the Turks; of the Chinese; of the Jews; of the Franks and their Emperors and Popes; and of the Indians, with a detailed account of Buddha and Buddhism. Volume II is in fact the first universal history. "One can seek in vain", says Professor Jahn,¹⁰ "both in the foregoing and in the following centuries for an equally bold and at the same time successful enterprise. This very first attempt to commit to paper a faithful account of the history of the world has not as yet been accorded the recognition it deserves as a unique achievement . . ." To Vol. II was originally prefixed a history of Öljeitü from his birth until the year 706/1306–07. A manuscript of this portion discovered by Professor A. Z. V. Togan in Meshed has since disappeared. The original Volume III bearing the title *Šuwar al-Aqālīm* ("Forms of the Climes") was a geographical compendium containing "not only a geographical and topographical description of the globe as it was then known . . ., but also an account of the system of highways in the Mongol Empire with mention of the milestones erected at imperial command, and a list of postal stages".¹¹ No manuscript of this volume has yet come to light. On the other hand, Volume III of the second version (in which the *Šuwar al-Aqālīm* became Volume IV) bearing the title *Shu'ab-i Panjgāna* ("The Five Genealogies") has survived in a unique manuscript discovered by Professor Togan in 1927 in the Topkapı Sarayı Library in Istanbul. As its title indicates it contains the genealogies of the ruling houses of five nations: the Arabs, Jews, Mongols, Franks and Chinese.¹²

The text of Volume I, published piecemeal in various countries over a period of more than a century, is now available in its entirety. On the other hand, much of Volume II is still accessible only in manuscripts. The sections on Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna and the Seljuqs were published by the late Professor Ateş in 1957 and 1960 respectively and that on the Ismā'īlīs by Mr. Dabīr-i Siyāqī (1958) and again by Messrs. Dānīsh-Pazhūh and Mudarrisī (1960), whilst Professor Jahn has produced an edition and translation of the *History of the Franks* (1951), facsimiles of the Persian and Arabic text of the *History of*

⁸ On Rashīd al-Dīn's non-historical works see A. Z. V. Togan, "The Composition of the History of the Mongols by Rashīd al-Dīn", *Central Asiatic Journal*, VII/1–2, pp. 60–72 (60–3), Karl Jahn, "The Still Missing Works of Rashīd al-Dīn", *ibid.*, IX/2, pp. 113–122.

⁹ See Jahn, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁰ *Rashīd al-Dīn's History of India* (The Hague, 1965), p. x.

¹¹ Jahn, "The Still Missing Works . . .", p. 120.

¹² On the *Shu'ab-i Panjgāna* see Togan, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–9, Jahn, "Study on Supplementary Persian Sources for the Mongol History of Iran" in *Aspects of Altaic Civilization* ed. Denis Sino (Bloomington, 1963), pp. 197–204 (198–9).

India (1965) and a translation and facsimiles of the *History of Oghuz and the Turks* (1969). The remainder of the volume, as also Volume III, the *Shu'ab-i Panjgāna*, is as yet unpublished.

It is of course Volume II with its concluding sections on the history of the various non-Muslim peoples that gives the work its unique character as "the first universal history of Orient and Occident".¹³ As an historical document, however, it is not to be compared with Volume I, the *Ta'rikh-i Ghāzānī*, which, based as it largely is on native sources now lost, constitutes our chief authority on the origins of the Mongol peoples and the rise of the Mongol World Empire. This volume, according to the original arrangement, consisted of two sections of unequal length, of which the first and shorter contained the history of the different Turkish and Mongol tribes, their divisions, genealogies, legends, etc. in a preface and four chapters, whilst the second and very much larger section dealt with the history of Genghis Khan, his ancestors and successors down to the Il-Khan Ghazan. A more convenient division into three separate volumes, first proposed by E. G. Browne in 1908, has been adopted by the Russians in their recent editions and translations of the Persian text. In accordance with this arrangement Rashīd al-Dīn's original Volume I is sub-divided as follows:

Volume I, Part 1: The Turkish and Mongol Tribes.

Volume I, Part 2: Genghis Khan and his Ancestors.

Volume II: The Successors of Genghis Khan.

Volume III: The Il-Khans of Persia.

Besides the new Russian translations there is also an older Russian version of Volume I of the text as thus divided, whilst the beginning of Volume III (the reign of Hülegü) was translated into French by Quatremère as long ago as 1836. In the forthcoming version of Volume II Rashīd al-Dīn will appear for the first time in English dress.

Volume II begins with the history of Ögedei, Genghis Khan's third son and first successor (1229–1241) as Great Khan. Next come accounts of Genghis Khan's other three sons: the eldest, Jochi (d. 1227), with the history of the Golden Horde founded by his son Batu (1237–56) down to the reign of Toqta (1291–1312); the second Chaghatai, the eponymous founder (1227–42) of the Chaghatai dynasty in Central Asia, with the history of that dynasty down to the reign of Du'a (1282–1307); and the youngest, Tolui (d. 1233), the father of two Great Khans, Möngke and Qubilai and of Hülegü, the founder of the Il-Khanid dynasty of Persia. There follow the reigns of the Great Khans, successors to Ögedei: his son Güyük (1246–48), his nephews Möngke (1251–59) and Qubilai (1260–94) and, finally, Qubilai's grandson Temür Öljeitü (1294–1307). As in the case of Genghis Khan, the biography of each prince is divided into three parts: the first contains a list of his wives, sons and descendants, the second gives the details of his life and reign and the third, in theory, consists of anecdotes illustrating the ruler's character, a selection of his *biligs* or sayings along with other miscellaneous information but, in practice, is often absent, the rubric being followed in the MSS. by a space left blank for the subsequent insertion of the relevant data. Part I, in the original manuscripts, included a portrait of the prince and a genealogical table of his descendants and Part II a picture of his enthronement, references to which and other illustrations are made in the text. In Part II, in the case of the Great Khans only, the narrative is interrupted at intervals to give the names of the contemporary Chinese and Muslim rulers and also some account of contemporary events within the latter's territories. Here, too, there are sometimes blanks in the MSS. where the name of a ruler had not been ascertainable at the time of writing.

The *Successors of Genghis Khan*, as the English title indicates, takes up the history of the Mongol Empire from the death of its founder. It recounts the campaigns in Russian and Eastern Europe (1236–42), which led to the establishment of the Golden Horde; it describes the conquest of Southern China (1268–79), which changed the House of Qubilai (better known to us as Kubla Khan) into the Chinese dynasty of the Yüan; and it breaks off in the reign of Qubilai's grandson Temür (1294–1307), still the nominal suzerain of territories extending westwards from Korea to the Balkans. Only Hülegü's expedition to the West, the destruction of the Ismā'ilis (1256), the overthrow of the Caliphate (1258) and the long struggle with the Mamlūk rulers of Egypt (1259–1313) receive no mention, these events

¹³ Jahn, *Rashīd al-Dīn's History of India*, p. x.

being recorded in the following volume on the Il-Khans of Persia. Here, in the *Successors of Genghis Khan* we have, as in the *Travels of Marco Polo*, a survey of Asia under the *pax Mongolica*, but with this difference that Rashīd al-Dīn disposed of far more copious and authoritative sources of information than the Venetian, whose account of Qubilai's Empire, for all its amazing detail, is of necessity restricted to the evidence of his own eyes and ears.

The earliest parts of the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* are based almost exclusively on a Mongolian chronicle called the *Altan Debter* or "Golden Book", which, as Rashīd al-Dīn himself tells us, was preserved in the Il-Khan's treasury in the charge of certain high officers. It is unlikely that the historian had direct access to this work, which was regarded as sacred; its contents were probably expounded to him orally by Bolad Chingsang, "Bolad the *chéng-hsiang* or Minister", the representative of the Great Khan at the Persian Court, and by Ghazan himself who as an authority on the Mongol traditions was second to Bolad alone. The original text of the *Golden Book* has not come down to us, but a Chinese version, the *Shêng-wu ch'in-chêng lu* or "Description of the Personal Campaigns of the Holy Warrior (i.e. Genghis Khan)", written at some time prior to 1285, is still extant, and the work was also utilized in the *Yüan shih*, the dynastic history of the Mongols, compiled in 1369.¹⁴ In his account of Genghis Khan's campaign in Western Asia Rashīd al-Dīn is for the most part content to reproduce, in a somewhat abridged form, the narrative of Juvainī (1226–83) in his *Ta'rikh-i Jahān-Gushā* ("History of the World-Conqueror"), but here too there are not infrequent interpolations from the Mongolian chronicle, and he even adopts its faulty chronology, in accordance with which the events of the campaign take place a year later than in reality. In the present volume Juvainī continues, down to the reign of Möngke (1251–59), to be Rashīd al-Dīn's main authority but with considerable additional material from other sources. Thus the earlier historian's account of the invasion of Eastern Europe (1241–42) is repeated almost verbatim to be followed, in a later chapter, by a much more detailed version of the same events based, like the preceding description of the campaigns in Russia (1237–1240), on "rough Mongol records",¹⁵ as is evident from the orthography of the proper names. So too in recounting the final campaign against the Chin rulers of Northern China (1231–34) Rashīd al-Dīn combines data from Juvainī with information derived from Far Eastern—Mongol and, to some extent, Chinese—sources. For the reigns of Qubilai and Temür he must have relied mainly upon the official correspondence of the Il-Khans, supplemented no doubt with the questioning of ambassadors and merchants arriving from Eastern Asia. The Great Khan's representative Bolad Chingsang, whom Rashīd had consulted on the early history of the Mongols, seems also to have been his chief authority on contemporary China.

The accounts of Qubilai's campaigns are plainly based on Mongolian rather than Chinese sources. They lack the topographical and chronological precision of the *Yüan shih* and contain many obviously legendary or folkloristic elements. They are valuable none the less as illustrating the Mongol point of view and add considerable detail and colour to the somewhat laconic narrative of the Chinese chronicles. Thus we read in Rashīd al-Dīn that Qubilai, when crossing the Yangtse to lay siege to Wuchang in Hupeh, made use of a specially fashioned birch-bark talisman.¹⁶ This resort to a shamanistic practice, designed apparently to placate the water spirits of the great river, is passed over in silence by the Chinese authorities; but we may well believe that the convert to Buddhism and the patron of Confucianism was still at heart a primitive animist. Again the story of the 20,000 criminals released from jail by the Great Khan's decree to take part in the conquest of the South is too circumstantial not to have some foundation in fact. Many legends must have been woven around the long and famous siege (1268–1273) of Siangyang, and it is perhaps in some such popular tale that Gau Finjan (the historical Kao Ho-chang involved in the murder of the vizier Ahmad of Fanākat, Polo's Bailo Acmat) is made to play a part in the final capture of the stronghold.¹⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn is at least right in stating that the

¹⁴ See J. A. Boyle, "Juvayni and Rashīd al-Dīn as Sources on the History of the Mongols" in *Historians of the Middle East* ed. B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (London, 1962), pp. 133–7 (p. 134).

¹⁵ V. Minorsky, "Caucasica III: The Alan Capital *Magas and the Mongol Campaigns", *BSOAS*, XIV/2 (1952), pp. 221–38 (p. 223).

¹⁶ On the practice amongst many peoples of propitiating "the

fickle and dangerous spirits of the water at fords" see J. G. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, Vol. III (London, 1918), pp. 414 ff.

¹⁷ See A. C. Moule, *Quinsai with Other Notes on Marco Polo* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 86–7, P. Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, Vol. I (Paris, 1959), pp. 10–11.

mangonels employed against the defences were of Muslim manufacture. They can hardly have been constructed, as Marco Polo alleges, by Christian engineers under the supervision of his father, his uncle and himself during the course of a siege which had not yet begun when the elder Polos left China after their first visit and had been over for two years before Marco himself first entered China!¹⁸ On the whole, however, Polo and Rashīd al-Dīn tend to corroborate and complement each other's statements, and between them the Venetian and the Persian provide a wonderfully vivid and detailed picture of Mongol China. It is perhaps these chapters of the *Successors of Genghis Khan* that will make the greatest appeal to the general reader.

The following are three typical passages:

On the building of the Grand Canal from Peking to Hangchow:

In Khan-Baliq¹⁹ and Daidu²⁰ there is a great river²¹ which flows from a northerly direction, from the region of Chamchiyal,²² which is the route to the summer residence. There are other rivers also, and outside the town they have constructed an extremely large *na'ur*²³ like a lake and have built a dam for it so that they can launch boats in it and sail for pleasure. The water of that river used to flow in a different channel and empty itself into the gulf that comes from the Ocean-Sea to the neighbourhood of Khan-Baliq. The engineers and learned men of Khitai,²⁴ having carried out a careful enquiry, declared that it was possible for ships to come to Khan-Baliq from most parts of Khitai, from the capital of Māchīn,²⁵ from Khingsang²⁶ and Zaitun²⁷ and from other places also. The Qa'an ordered a great canal to be cut and the water of that river and several other rivers to be diverted into that canal. It is a 40 days' voyage to Zaitun, which is the port of India and the capital of Māchīn. On these rivers many sluices have been built for [the provision of] water to the provinces. When a ship comes to one of these sluices it is raised up by means of a winch together with its cargo, no matter how large and heavy it is, and set down in the water on the other side of the dam so that it can proceed. The width of the canal is more than 30 ells. Qubilai Qa'an ordered it to be walled with stone so that no earth should fall into it. Alongside the canal is a great highway which leads to Māchīn, a distance of 40 days. The whole of that road is paved with stone so that, when there is a heavy rainfall, the beasts of burden may not get stuck in the mud. On either side of the road, willows and other trees have been planted so that the shadow of the trees falls upon the whole length of the road. And no one, soldier or other, dares to break a branch from the trees or give a leaf to his animals. Villages, shops and temples have been built on either side so that the whole of the 40-day route is fully populated.

On the practice of taking finger-prints:

They²⁸ take the fingerprints of the persons that are questioned. And the meaning of finger-print is as follows. It has been discovered and confirmed by experience that the finger joints of all people are different. And so whenever they take a deposition from anyone, they place the paper between his fingers and on the back of the document mark the place where his finger joints touched, so that should he at some time deny his statement they can confront him with the marks of his fingers, and since these are correct, he can no longer deny it. And having taken this precaution in all the Divans, they make their report and take action in accordance with the order then given.²⁹

¹⁸ See Pelliot, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5, Moule, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-7.

¹⁹ The Turkish name ("Royal Town") for Peking, Polo's Cambaluc. See Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo I* (Paris, 1959), pp. 140-2.

²⁰ Polo's Taidu, the Chinese Ta-Tu "Great Capital" Qubilai's new capital built alongside the Chin capital of Khan-Baliq. See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo II* (Paris, 1963), pp. 843-5.

²¹ The Sankan or Yungting.

²² The Mongol name for the Nankow pass some 30 miles N.W. of Peking.

²³ Mongol *naghur* "lake, pond".

²⁴ Northern China, our Cathay.

²⁵ The Persian name for Southern China.

²⁶ Hangchow. Khingsai, Polo's Quinsai, represents the Chinese expression *Hsing-tsai*, a shortened form of *Hsing-tsai so* meaning "Emperor's Temporary Residence". See A. C. Moule *Quinsai with other Notes on Marco Polo* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 8-11.

²⁷ Chuanchow on the coast of Fukien, Polo's Çaiton. On this famous seaport, see Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo I*, pp. 583-97.

²⁸ I.e. the officials of the "Great Divan, which they call *shing* [Chinese *shêng*, Polo's *scieng*]." This was the Chung-shushêng or Grand Secretariat, which "worked at the capital, but had provincial delegations called 'moving' (. . . *hsing*) Chung-shu shêng, or simply *hsing-shêng*, and even *shêng* alone; the areas under the control of each *hsing-shêng* soon came to be themselves named *shêng* colloquially, and this is the origin of the modern use of *shêng* in the sense of 'province'. See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo II*, pp. 827-8.

²⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn had clearly only a vague idea of what the process of taking finger-prints involved. On the antiquity of the practice in China and Japan see Sir Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, ed. Cordier, Vol. (London) (1914), pp. 123-4, note 2.

On the animosity between Christians and Muslims:

During the vizierate of Senge a group of Muslim merchants came to the Qa'an's Court from the country of the Qori, Barqu⁸⁰ and Qirqiz⁸¹ and brought as their audience-offering white-footed, red-beaked gerfalcons and a white eagle. The Qa'an showed them favour and gave them food from his table, but they would not eat it. He asked "Why will you not eat?" They replied: "The food is unclean to us." The Qa'an was offended and commanded: "Henceforth Muslims and all People of the Book shall not slaughter sheep but shall split open the breast and side in the Mongol fashion. And whoever slaughters sheep shall be slaughtered likewise and his wife, children, house and property given to the informer."⁸²

'Isā Tarsā Kelemechi,⁸³ Ibn Ma'ālī and Baidaq, some of the mischievous, wicked and corrupt men of their age, availed themselves of this decree to obtain a *yarliḡh* that whoever slaughtered a sheep in his house should be executed. On this pretext they extorted much wealth from the people and tempted the slaves of Muslims, saying "If you inform against your master we will set you free." And for the sake of their freedom they calumniated their masters and accused them of crimes. 'Isā Kelemechi and his accursed followers brought matters to such a pass that for four years Muslims could not circumcise their children. They also brought false charges against Maulānā Burhān al-Dīn Bukhārī, a disciple of the godly Shaikh al-Islām Saif al-Dīn Bākhārī (*may God have mercy on him!*), and he was sent to Manzi, where he died. Conditions became such that most Muslims left the country of Khitai. Thereupon most of the chief Muslims of those parts—Bahā al-Dīn Qunduzī, Shādi Zo-Cheng, 'Umar Qirqizī, Nāsir al-Dīn Malik Kāshgharī, Hindū Zo-Cheng and other notables—jointly offered many presents to the vizier so that he made the following representation [to the Qa'an]: "All the Muslim merchants have departed from hence and no merchants are coming from the Muslim countries; the *tamghas*⁸⁴ are inadequate and they do not bring *tangsuqs*;⁸⁵ and all this because for the past seven years they have not slaughtered sheep. If it be so commanded the merchants will come and go and the *tamgha* will be in full." Permission was given for the issue of a *yarliḡh* to this effect.⁸⁶ Again, the Christians in the Qa'an's reign showed great fanaticism against the Muslims and sought to attack them by representing to the Qa'an that there was a verse in the Qur'ān which ran: "*Kill the polytheists, all of them.*"⁸⁷ The Qa'an was annoyed and asked: "From whence do they know this?" He was told that a letter on this subject had arrived from Abaqa Khan. He sent for the letter and summoning the *dānishmands*⁸⁸ asked the senior amongst them, Bahā al-Dīn Bahā'i: "Is there such a verse in your Qur'ān?" "Yes," he replied. "Do you regard the Qur'ān," asked the Qa'an, "as the word of God?" "We do," he said. "Since then," the Qa'an went on, "you have been commanded by God to kill the infidels, why do you not kill them?" He replied: "The time has not yet come, and we have not the means." The Qa'an fell into a rage and said: "I at least have the means." And he ordered him to be put to death. However, the Emir Ahmad the vizier, the Cadi Bahā al-Dīn, who also had the rank of vizier, and the Emir Dashman prevented this on the pretext that they would ask others also. They sent for Maulānā Ḥamīd al-Dīn, formerly of Samarqand, and the same question was put to him. He said that there was such a verse. "Why then," said the Qa'an, "do you not kill [these people]?"

He answered: "God almighty has said: 'Kill the polytheists,' but if the Qa'an will so instruct me, I will tell him what a polytheist is." "Speak," said the Qa'an. "Thou art not a polytheist," said Ḥamīd al-Dīn, "since thou writest the name of the Great God at the head of thy *yarliḡhs*. Such a one is a polytheist who does not recognize God, and attributes companions to him, and rejects the Great God." The Qa'an was extremely pleased and these words took firm root in his heart. He honoured Ḥamīd al-Dīn and showed favour to him; and at his suggestion the others were released.

⁸⁰ The Qori and the Barqu (Barghu) or Barghut were Mongol tribes inhabiting the Barghujin Tögüm or "Barghu Depression" i.e. the region of the present-day Barghuzin River to the east of Lake Baikal, Polo's "Plain of Bargu". See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo I*, pp. 76–9.

⁸¹ I.e. the Kirghiz Turks, who now give their name to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Kirghizia but who at that time inhabited the forests around the Upper Yenisei.

⁸² According to the *Yüan shih* the edict forbidding ritual slaughter was issued on the 27th January, 1280. See Pelliot, *op. cit.* pp. 77–8, and also P. Ratchnevsky, "Rašid ad-Dīn über die Mohammedaner-Verfolgungen in China unter Qubilai" in *Rashid al-Dīn Commemoration Volume* (1318–1968) ed. J. A. Boyle and K. Jahn, *Central Asiatic Journal* XIV/1–3 (Wiesbaden, 1970), pp. 163–80.

⁸³ I.e. Jesus the Christian, the Interpreter: the Ai-hsieh of the

Chinese texts. On this Arabic-speaking Christian, who passed the whole of his life in the service of the Mongols and who took part in an embassy to the Pope, see Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London, 1930), pp. 228–9.

⁸⁴ On the Turkish word *tamgha*, here used in the sense of *octroi*, see Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen* vol. II (Wiesbaden, 1965), pp. 554–65.

⁸⁵ On *tangsuq* "a curious or valuable object brought as a present" see Doerfer, *op. cit.* pp. 570–3.

⁸⁶ I.e. a royal decree.

⁸⁷ Apparently a contamination of Qur'ān, ix, 5 ("... kill those who join other gods with God...") and 36 ("... attack those who join other gods with God in all..."). The reference is of course, in both cases, not to polytheists in general but to the heathen opponents of the Prophet.

⁸⁸ I.e. Muslim divines.

To the historian Rashīd al-Dīn's work is above all a repository of material on the history, legends, beliefs and mode of life of the 12th -and 13th- century Mongols, material that has survived nowhere else in such profusion. The earliest parts of the *Ta'rikh-i Ghāzānī* are, as we have seen, based almost exclusively on native tradition. In the present volume the data on the Golden Horde, on the rebellion of Qubilai's younger brother Ariq Böke and on the long-drawn-out struggle between Qubilai and Qaidu are derived from similar written or oral sources. We learn here too how this material was preserved: how "it was the custom in those days to write down each day every word that the ruler uttered," a special courtier being appointed for this purpose; how these *biligs* or sayings, often couched in "rhythmical and obscure language," were recited on festive occasions by such exalted persons as the Great Khan Ögedei and his brother Chaghatai; and how Temür Öljeitü was chosen to succeed his grandfather Qubilai because he knew the *biligs* of Genghis Khan better than his rival and declaimed them "well and with a pure accent". Of the *biligs* recorded in the *Successors of Genghis Khan* we may quote the saying attributed to a grandson, Genghis Khan's youngest son Tolui, a man called Toq-Temür, who was "extremely brave and a very good archer":

In battle he rode a grey horse and used to say: "People choose bays and horses of other colours so that blood may not show on them and the enemy not be encouraged. As for me I choose a grey horse, because just as red is the adornment of women, so the blood on a rider and his horse, which drips on to the man's clothes and the horse's limbs and can be seen from afar, is the adornment and decoration of men."

Besides preserving the traditional lore of the Mongols and recording the history of their world empire Rashīd al-Dīn was also the historian of his own country. Volume III of the *Ta'rikh-i Ghāzānī* is our main source on the Il-Khanid period of Persian history and contains what Professor Petrushevsky has called a "priceless collection"³⁹ of Ghazan's *yarlighs* or decrees on his fiscal reforms, of which Rashīd al-Dīn was an ardent supporter and perhaps the initiator. The fame of the statesman-historian rests, however, less on these solid achievements than on the attempt, in the second part of his work, to compile a general history of the whole Eurasian continent. His is certainly the credit of producing, 600 years before Wells's *Outline of History*, the first World History in the true sense ever written in any language.⁴⁰

³⁹ I. P. Petrushevsky, "Rashid al-Din in Persian Historiography of the Middle Ages", *XXVII International Congress of Orientalists: Papers Presented by the U.S.S.R. Delegation* (Moscow, 1967), p. 8.

⁴⁰ See also Jahn, "Rašid al-Dīn as a World Historian" in *Yādnāme-ye Jan Rypka* (Prague, 1967), pp. 79-87.